

REMARKS

An Office Action was mailed on December 21, 2005 and declared final.

Claims 1-19 are pending, of which claims 1 and 14 are the only independent claims.

By the foregoing, independent claims 1 and 14 are amended, and claim 20 is newly presented. Entry of all claim amendments is requested. No new matter is being introduced and all claims are well supported by the specification. Passage of all claims to allowance is earnestly solicited.

Claims 1, 3-5, 8, 12-16, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,794,013 to Iacovelli et al. (Iacovelli). Dependent claims 6, 7 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Iacovelli in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,743,210 to Lampe (Lampe). Dependent claims 9-11 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Iacovelli.

The present invention is a pet mat configured to prevent a food or water bowl from sliding on the top surface of the pet mat. As claimed in independent claims 1 and 14, the pet mat comprises a plurality of bumps arranged irregularly and asymmetrically on a planar upper surface. These bumps are sized and spaced such that a bowl is restrained by the bumps when the bowl is placed on the upper surface.

As now more clearly claimed in the same independent claims, the bumps are arranged in a contiguous field on the upper surface. The claimed structure is now further clarified in that the plurality of bumps are sized and spaced such that when the bowl is placed anywhere in the contiguous field, the bowl normally falls within interstices of the bumps and is restrained by said bumps in a plurality of non-dedicated locations. Further, the mat comprises a bottom surface resisting sliding with respect to a support surface on which the pet mat is placed.

By now Applicant need not reiterate the problem related to the aggressive feeding by pets and the inherent spillage. Thus, as is clearly understood the object of the invention is to make the process of reducing the spillage of pet food or water when feeding pets as seamless and automatic as possible.

Accordingly, when a pet owner places a pet bowl on the inventive mat, the owner need not think about where to place the bowl in order for it to catch bumps that restrain it. In the presently claimed invention, the owner can be confident that wherever the bowl is placed, it "will normally fall within the interstices between the pattern of bumps" (spec. 1:26-27) and be restrained. Thus, the claimed single field of bumps provides the necessary uniformity for assuring that a bowl can be normally placed anywhere and consequently provides the convenience and assurance that the bowl will be properly restrained.

Should the pet spill the bowl, the claimed edge provides a further assurance — this time, that the spill will be contained to the top surface of the mat. Additionally, the claimed bottom surface, which resists sliding, reduces the chance of spillage in the first place.

Iacovelli does not teach, disclose or suggest the claimed structure of independent claims 1 and 14 nor does it provide the benefits of the claimed structure. Iacovelli is cited for teaching an heavy duty vehicle floor mat 10 made of vinyl (2:35-36) and having a raised inner lip 30 (3:3-5) as a peripheral edge. *In arguendo*, almond shaped ridges 44 of texturized steel plate 42 (3:26-27, 3:36) hold a rectangular bowl and, thus, are synonymous with the claimed bumps.

Therein, obviously lip 30 does not bound a single contiguous field of a bump, but rather a plurality of fields of which apparently only one small field, heel plate 42, is configured to accept rectangular bowls when placed properly in a limited number of locations. Thus, unlike the claimed structure wherein the bowl normally falls within the interstices of the bumps in a contiguous field bounded by a peripheral edge, Iacovelli apparently teaches that a bowl can only be placed in a small heel plate area 42 and then only in a limited way. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection for the reason alone.

The claimed structure also is not obvious or suggested by Iacovelli. Firstly, there is no suggestion in Iacovelli to solve the problem of pet bowl placements and spillage nor of convenience sought by pet owners. In fact to arrive at the presently claimed invention, Iacovelli would need to be modified to permit only one area, which is apparently heel plate area 42, in single field. To do so, Iacovelli would need to understand the needs and problems of pet bowl placement to avoid spillage rather than the need to texture a heavy duty surface for scraping the bottom of work boots. Thus, without some teaching in that direction, which one of five

texturizations should be chosen. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection.

The missing teachings are not filled by Lampe. Lampe teaches pet food dish with an insert held by side walls. Therein, Lampe fails to teach, disclose, or suggest any of the claimed structure and in particular the claimed arrangement of bumps to restrain a bowl in a plurality of non-dedicated locations.

The Examiner is accordingly respectfully requested to withdraw all rejections for the reasons given individually and cumulatively.

All dependent claims are allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend.

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, he is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper, including any extension fee necessary, may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



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